

Message Text

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TAGS:

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST ARTICLE ON NEGOTIATIONS

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF ARTICLE BY H.D.S. GREENWAY IN WASHINGTON POST ON THURSDAY (MAY 25) ON CURRENT STATUS OF MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS.
2. BEGIN TEXT: JERUSALEM: THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING U.S. CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S MIDDLE EAST ARMS PACKAGE HAS TEMPORARILY OBSCURED THE REGION'S FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM: HOW TO GET PEACE NEGOTIATIONS GOING AGAIN.

SUNDAY, CABINET SECRETARY ARYEH NAOR TOOK PAINS TO SAY THAT THE FAILURE OF THE ISRAELI CABINET TO DISCUSS THE LONG AWAITED ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY WASHINGTON CONCERNING THE FUTURE OF THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP WAS NOT BECAUSE ISRAEL WAS ANGRY ABOUT THE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DECISION.
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IT IS CLEAR, NEVERTHELESS, THAT THE BITTER RECRIMINATIONS OVER THE ARMS DEAL HAS CLOUDED ISRAELI-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND A COOLING-OFF PERIOD PROBABLY WOULD BE WELCOMED BY BOTH SIDES.

BASICALLY, THE UNITED STATES HAS ASKED ISRAEL TWO QUES-

TIONS: WILL ISRAEL COMMIT ITSELF TO MAKING A FIRM DECISION AS TO THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA AFTER THE PROPOSED FIVE-YEAR INTERIM PERIOD? IF SO, WHAT MECHANISMS MIGHT THE ISRAELIS SUGGEST TO IMPLEMENT SUCH A DECISION?

ISRAEL'S PLAN OF LIMITED SELF-RULE FOR THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, WITH SECURITY AND PUBLIC ORDER REMAINING IN ISRAELI HANDS, CALLS FOR PUTTING THE QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY IN ABEYANCE WITH A REVIEW OF THE SITUATION TO TAKE PLACE IN FIVE YEARS. ISRAEL, HOWEVER, IS OPPOSED TO COMMITTING ITSELF TO ANY SORT OF REFERENDUM THAT COULD LEAD TO A PALESTINIAN STATE. THUS ISRAEL WANTS TO LEAVE THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK UNRESOLVED FOR AT LEAST FIVE YEARS WITH AN OPEN-ENDED REVIEW BEGINNING THEN.

EGYPT, HOWEVER, FEARS THIS COULD LEAD TO A PERPETUATION OF THE MILITARY OCCUPATION.

THE UNITED STATES IS TRYING TO BREAK THE NEGOTIATING IMPASSE BY TRYING TO GET ISRAEL TO COMMIT ITSELF TO SOME FIRM DECISION AFTER FIVE YEARS WITHOUT ASKING JERUSALEM TO SAY EXACTLY WHAT THE DECISION WOULD BE. THE UNITED STATES BELIEVES THAT EGYPT MIGHT ACCEPT THIS AS A BASIS FOR RESUMING NEGOTIATIONS.

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IT IS IMPORTANT, FROM THE AMERICAN POINT OF VIEW, TO NOTE WHAT THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT ASKED. IT HAS NOT ASKED ISRAEL TO COMMIT ITSELF TO WITHDRAWALS FROM SPECIFIED TERRITORIES. IT HAS ASKED ONLY THAT THE SITUATION NOT BE LEFT OPEN AFTER THE FIVE-YEAR PERIOD. IT WAS FELT THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF MENACHEM BEGIN WAS TOO EMOTIONALLY TIED TO POSSESSION OF THE WEST BANK AND GAZA AS PART OF THE BIBLICAL LAND OF ISRAEL TO ASK FOR A COMMITMENT TO WITHDRAW.

THE UNITED STATES HAS SHIFTED TACTICS SINCE JANUARY WHEN DIRECT TALKS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND EGYPT BROKE DOWN. AT FIRST THE EFFORT WAS DIRECTED AT TRYING TO ACHIEVE AN ACCEPTABLE "DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES" TO GUIDE FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS. THAT APPROACH WAS ABANDONED IN MARCH AFTER BEGIN'S TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES.

INSTEAD, THE UNITED STATES HAS SWUNG BEHIND ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER MOSHE DAYAN'S SUGGESTION THAT SEARCH FOR AN AGREEMENT ON A DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES BE SHELVED TEMPORARILY AND THAT THE PRACTICALITIES OF THE FUTURE OF

THE WEST BANK AND GAZA BE EXPLORED INSTEAD.

IT IS IN THIS CONTEXT THAT DAYAN HAS ASKED THE UNITED STATES TO PUT A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION TO EGYPT:

IF ISRAEL WERE PREPARED TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING ON THE WEST BANK, WOULD EGYPT BE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE ON BEHALF OF THE WEST BANK ARABS IN THE ABSENCE OF KING HUSSEIN'S JOINING THE PEACE TALKS?

IN PUBLIC, THE ISRAELIS STILL INSIST THAT THEIR PEACE PLAN IS THE ONLY PLAN AROUND AND THAT THEY ARE ENTITLED TO AN EGYPTIAN COUNTERPROPOSAL SO THAT THE TWO CAN BE NEGOTIATED.

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DAYAN TOLD THE KNESSET WEDNESDAY THAT THE AMERICANS HAD, IN EFFECT, RECEIVED A PARTIAL ANSWER FROM THE EGYPTIANS WHICH RADIO ISRAEL DESCRIBED AS AMOUNTING TO A COUNTERPROPOSAL. ACCORDING TO DAYAN, HOWEVER, THE EGYPTIAN DOCUMENT "APPEARED SO IMPOSSIBLE TO THE AMERICANS THAT THEY, TO PUT IT DIPLOMATICALLY, RETURNED IT TO ITS AUTHOR."

DESPITE DAYAN'S STATEMENT, GIVEN IN THE HEAT OF A KNESSET DEBATE, THERE WAS NO CONFIRMATION THAT THE EGYPTIANS HAD, IN FACT OFFERED ANYTHING THAT COULD BE DESCRIBED AS A COUNTER-PROPOSAL TO THE ISRAEL PEACE PLAN, AND THE ISRAELI INSISTENCE ON SUCH A COUNTERPROPOSAL SEEMS DESTINED TO FAIL.

THERE IS LITTLE OPTIMISM AT THIS POINT THAT THE ISRAELIS WILL COMMIT THEMSELVES TO MAKING A FIRM DECISION ON THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK IN FIVE YEARS OR THAT THE EGYPTIANS WILL AGREE TO NEGOTIATE THE FUTURE OF THAT TERRITORY. BUT THE AMERICAN EFFORT IS LESS DEMANDING OF THE ISRAELIS THAN PREVIOUS EFFORTS.

THE UNITED STATES WOULD LIKE ANY SOLUTION TO THE WEST BANK'S FUTURE TO EXPRESS THE WILL OF THOSE WHO LIVE THERE BUT IT WOULD NOT INSIST ON A REFERENDUM WHICH THE ISRAELIS FEAR WOULD GUARANTEE THE BIRTH OF A PALESTINIAN STATE.

FOR THE TIME BEING, HOWEVER, CONCERN OVER THE POSSIBILITIES OF FUTURE DANGERS CAUSED BY THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S SALE OF WARPLANES TO EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA IS TOPIC NUMBER ONE AND THE ISRAELIS FEAR THAT IT WILL CAUSE THE

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ARABS TO HARDEN THEIR POSITION.

THE UNITED STATES AND EGYPT FEAR THAT ISRAEL MAY HARDEN ITS LINE AS WELL. THE ISRAELIS MAY BE MUCH MORE RELUCTANT TO GIVE UP ANY OF THEIR AIR BASES IN THE OCCUPIED SINAI IF THEY PERCEIVE SAUDI ARABIA, JUST ACROSS THE GULF OF AQABA, TO BE A CONFRONTATION STATE.

BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES PLANS TO SELL SAUDI ARABIA 60 F15 JET FIGHTERS, THE FIRST OF WHICH WILL NOT BE DELIVERED UNTIL 1981, THE ISRAELIS SEEM DETERMINED TO CONSIDER SAUDI ARABIA A CONFRONTATION STATE WHETHER IT WISHES TO BECOME ONE OR NOT.

ISRAEL REJECTS SUGGESTIONS THAT THERE IS A WIDER, REGIONAL PROBLEM ENGULFING A POTENTIAL THREAT TO SAUDI ARABIA FROM QUARTERS OTHER THAN ISRAEL OR THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS COMMITMENTS TO OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION.

ISRAELI STRATEGIC THINKING HAS BECOME A PRISONER OF THE PAST AND THE PAST LEADS IT TO BELIEVE THAT ANY ARMS IN ANY ARAB HANDS WILL BE USED AGAINST ISRAEL IF THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF.

IN THIS ATMOSPHERE, IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT PEACE NEGOTIATIONS COULD HAVE HAD MUCH OF A CHANCE TO SUCCEED REGARDLESS OF HOW THE VOTE ON AMERICAN WAR PLANES HAD GONE IN THE U.S. CONGRESS. END TEXT.

CHRISTOPHER

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